

Settlingly Ever After

by She's a Star

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Summary: In which a Saturday night showing of Furry Vengeance brings Liz Lemon and Wesley Snipes together, and they kinda just keep being brought together. Over, and over, and over ...

## Settlingly Ever After

This was originally written in May 2010, when all of these pop culture references were totally current. Who could have foreseen that Furry Vengeance wouldn't stand the test of time?

The section headings are taken from Liz's speech on her perfect man from 4x17.

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><p><strong><em>I'll tell you what I do want.<em>\*\*

\*\*\_I. I want someone who will be monogamous\_\*\*

It's Saturday night, and if anyone asks, Liz is in line to see Iron Man 2. Robert Downey Jr. - sexy! Action sequences - awesome! The choice to recast Don Cheadle as Rhodey - edgy! Gwyneth Paltrow making women worldwide feel guilty about not really being able to walk in heels, let alone run from bad guys in them, even though anyone who married that douchetool from Coldplay \_and\_ decided to name their website 'goop' should somehow immediately be revoked of their ability to make \_anybody\_ feel inferior - ... fun. Scarlett Johansson kicking butt in a really tight outfit, and probably also heels. Yaaaay.

All right, so maybe she's actually going to see-

"One for Furry Vengeance, please," comes a familiar, British voice from the dude standing ahead of her in line.

"What? No!" She yanks down the hood of her Sweatshirt of Incognito Shame indignantly. "No way. You are not seeing this movie."

The More Appropriately Named Wesley Snipes turns around, mouth falling open. "Liz?"

"No one is supposed to want to see this movie! I'm the one person seeing this movie!"

"Excuse me. I've had plans to see this film all week."

"Why in the hell would you plan for a week to see something called 'Furry Vengeance'?"

He hits her with a keen, piercing stare. "Why would you?"

And, well, he sounds all serious and he's here and it's weird and she wants her goddamn jujubes, and somehow the truth all just comes spilling out. "I like Brendan Fraser, okay? That guy, he's been places. I watch him, and I feel like - like he'd know how to save me from mummies, or pervy cartoon monkeys, or - or what to do if we got locked in a bomb shelter for like twenty years."

"He didn't know what to do,\_ Liz," Wesley says, rolling his eyes. "It wasn't as if he flourished down there. His emotional growth was completely stunted. It's a wonder Alicia Silverstone was able to look past it at all."

"His unjaded childlike spirit was endearing, okay!" Liz snaps back. It's kind of surreal. She's never had an actual impassioned debate about Blast from the Past before. She tried to once, but stopped pretty quick when Dennis told her she had 'lame taste in movies, dummy.' Dennis said that. Dennis. "You know what, you don't know anything. You're probably one of those stuck-up snobs who can't even admit that Bedazzled is a good movie."

"Bedazzled is a great movie."

Oh. Whoa.

"The part where he's the Colombian drug lord and his wife is cheating on him with her English instructor ..." He shakes his head and chuckles. "Classic."

"Oh, please! The part where he's the sensitive sketch artist who cries about dolphins on the beach totally kicks the Colombian drug lord part's ass -"

"The only arse-kicking I seem to remember is the arse-kicking good time that is the Colombian drug lord storyline -"

"Uh," says the girl at the counter, "are you guys going to pay, or what?"

Wesley lifts his eyebrows at her. She's pretty sure it's, like, the him-equivalent of asking her out. Ugh.

"Fine," she groans. "Whatever."

"Jolly good," he says, and she scowls. "Two for Furry Vengeance, please."

"Sure," the girl says. For some reason, she flutters her eyelashes while she rings them up, which just seems - not necessary, like, at all. "You're British, right?"

"Pip pip, cheerio," he says, all fake-bashful.

"In no way do either of those phrases mean 'yes'," Liz says, exasperated.

"Like Robert Pattinson," behind-the-counter girl continues, spellbound. Oh, gross. "You know, I'm supposed to walk through the theater while the movie's on and, like, make sure people aren't making out in there and stuff. I could maybe come and sit with you-"

"I'm sorry, old bird," he says. "I'm already spoken for, I'm afraid."

"Can she get you free popcorn?" the girl asks, shooting a look at Liz that holds totally unmerited levels of 'bitch please'-ery. What is even going on right now? "I can get you free popcorn."

"No, she can't," Wesley says, with an unimpressed sidelong glance at Liz, "or much of anything else. But she—" He puts an arm around her shoulders, seeming almost ... proud? (Huh?), "is my date."

Liz shakes him off, because no way is he getting to 1/8th base.

"Oh," the girl says, sinking back into bored monotone. "Too bad."

"Better luck next time," Wesley says to the girl, taking their tickets. "I'm certain that you'll have your shot with Mandy Patinkin someday!"

"Robert Pattinson," Liz hisses at him as they walk away. "Are you eighty? And did you just call her an old bird? Seriously? She was like twenty. And ..." Gross, wrong, bad, gross, ew (although, okay, kind of understandable. Liz gets the British accent thing. Her future husband totally has the British accent thing going for him. And by 'future husband,' she means Colin Firth. Or, since they're on the subject, 1980s Cary Elwes, as long as he's dressed like a pirate)- "... she was hitting on you."

"Yes, well," Wesley says with a shrug, "I've already got my date for the evening." He gives her this triumphant little look, all Aren't We A Pair Of Settling Soulmates. Yeah, no, not so much, not ever. One movie with a 7% rating on Rotten Tomatoes does not a lifelong romance-devoid-of-actual-romance make, buddy.

"We're getting popcorn this time," she informs him harshly.

He sighs, woeful.

\* \* \*

><p><strong><em>II. and nice to his mother.<em>\*\*

Liz's iPod's doing that thing where it hisses like it's mad at her

and emits a whole bunch of static again, and her hair's actually like 88% decent today, so she doesn't really want to tempt fate by coming within ten feet of it. The iPod, not her hair. Unfortunately, it's also one of those days where she's totally jonesing to listen to The Final Countdown over and over. (Whatever helps you make it through the work week. Whatever helps.) Her solution is: pop on over to the Hallmark store and grab one of those cards that plays music when you open it. The Final Countdown is such a total musical-card song, it'll totally be there.

Oh yeah. Problem solving \_skills\_.

"You know, Lemon," Jack is saying on the phone, "if you gave up your sad attempts at frugality for once and actually bought an \_iPod\_, you probably wouldn't have these problems."

"Shut it, pal. Me and my MyJamz have been very happy together. But like all great friendships, we, too, have the occasional need to spend some time apart—" She turns into the next aisle, figuring graduation cards are probably her best bet in the Final Countdown department, when- "\_You.\_"

Wesley looks up at her.

"Me?" Jack says on the phone.

"No," Liz growls. "\_Him.\_"

"Ah," Jack says sagely. "The more appropriately named Wesley Snipes. Tell him I said hi."

"Still not okay with you being okay with this guy, for the record."

"Enjoy your greeting card aisle rendezvous, Lemon."

"Um, a) they're all greeting card aisles. It's the Hallmark store, and b) yeah, I'm gonna run the risk of becoming predictable, and say \_blerg\_. "

Jack hangs up, laughing to himself.

"Double blerg," she mumbles, and snaps her phone shut.

"Liz Lemon," Wesley says, all pleased and junk. Ugh. "What on earth brings you here?"

"Cards, Wesley. It's a card store."

"I \_know\_ it's a card store. Care to be more specific?"

"Uh, not really," she says, glaring at him. "I'm just getting a card. For a person. Not me. Not because I'm having any iPod difficulties."

"Oh, Liz," Wesley says, making a face. "You should at least spring for a MyJamz. They're the cat's spats in England."

\_Blerggggggg.\_

"What are you doing here?"

"I'm just getting a card. For a person. Not me." He holds one up as evidence. It's actually sort of nice. White with pink flowers, and swirly cursive.

"Who's that for? Your girlfriend?" She sounds like a twelve year old who's about to steal your lunch money. This guy does scary things to her.

He's all cheerfully unaffected, though. "We both know I don't have one of those. No, it's for my mum."

There's this fraction of a second where it's sort of like, Aw, he said 'mum!' He calls his mom 'Mum'! 'Cause he's British! That's so—and then she's overwhelmed by the urge to scratch her brain out of her skull and feed it to Tracy's python.

"Mother's Day was a few weeks ago, you know," she points out, clinging to nice things like holidays that have already passed, and sanity. "Pretty sloppy, Mr. Snipes."

"Oh, no," Wesley says, "that was just American Mother's Day. In England, it's not 'til June. And we call it Womb'oween."

"Yeah," Liz says, "I have literally never heard that, and I read all the Harry Potters like five times, even that last one where all they did was camp, so—"

"I hope she likes it," Wesley continues, smiling a little bit down at the card. "She's the best, my mum. It gets difficult, having her all the way back in merry old Albion."

Well. That's kind of nice.

"She says hi, by the way," he continues, looking back up.

Yeah, niceness over. "You told your mom about me?"

"Yup. She admires your stubbornness, by the way."

"Creepy," Liz says pointedly.

"What's creepy, exactly?" Wesley retorts. "The fact that, yes, I told my mum about you, or the fact that we live in a day and age wherein it's considered creepy for a man to share his life with the woman who gave him life?"

Well.

"Both," Liz finally, lamely settles.

Wesley shrugs. "Fair enough."

"And," she adds reluctantly, "my boss Jack says hi."

"Does he?" Wesley grins. "Well, you tell him 'Hallo there, Jackie boy' for me."

"I am not putting an 'a' in 'hello,'" Liz says sternly. "No way. God, you are so—"

Wesley just looks at her.

"—but the card is nice," she finishes. It even comes out sounding sincere. Probably because it sort of is.

He smiles. "I'm glad you think so." It gets quiet. She realizes she can't really come up with anything that sucks about this particular moment in time, which is scary.

"Look," Wesley says softly, taking a few steps closer. So she can see the card. She takes a step in, too. "It's even got a little tune in it."

\_Look at the staaaaars, look how they shine for youuuuu,\_ sings the card.

"If you ask me," Wesley says, a little misty-eyed, "anyone who doesn't love Coldplay has a dead and empty soul."

Oh, barf. "\_BLERG.\_"

"Really, Liz, what the dallywaddle is this 'blerg' you keep saying?" Wesley demands, frowning. "Your made-up words aren't nearly as cute as you seem to think they are, you know."

\* \* \*

><p><strong><em>III. And I want someone who likes musicals<em>\*\*

"Why are you in my living room again?"

"The universe."

"Ugh. Seriously? \_That's\_ your excuse? Still?"

"Well, really, Liz, if you have another explanation as to why the tyre of my footcycle popped \_right outside your apartment building\_, I'd love to hear it." She just knows, \_knows\_, it's tire with a 'y.'

"That was 'tyre' with a 'y,' by the way," he adds.

"Yeah, I got that," she grumbles. "Well, just — don't touch anything. And stay on that cushion."

"You're confining me to a single square of couch?"

"Couch? Is that what you Brits are calling it these days? Really? Are you sure you don't mean loungecusher?"

"I ... am very sure," he replies, looking at her like she's the crazy one. Pfft! He wishes.

"Okay," she says, crossing her arms in front of her chest. "Well, Mamma Mia's on HBO, and I haven't watched it the whole way through since like last month, and I know it's a \_musical\_ and you're too

\_manly\_ for movies with \_singing\_ and \_dancing\_ but guess what, you can just deal, because it's my TV in my apartment on \_my\_ loun... couch, and we're watching what I want. Okay? And if you have a problem with that, then you can take your tyre-with-a-y and stick it up your-"

"Ooh, Mamma Mia," Wesley interrupts, reaching for the remote to turn up the volume. "I love this one. It's got a great energy, doesn't it?"

Liz looks at him. For like ten seconds. "Are you sure you're not gay?"

"Just British, Liz," he says. He's already staring, rapt, at the TV, with a little enthusiastic smile. "Just British."

"Well," she says, "okay," and she settles back onto the loungecusher, leaving the middle cushion empty between them.

\* \* \*

><p><strong><em>IV. but knows to just shut his mouth when I'm watching Lost.<em>\*\*

"I can't believe you crashed my house \_today\_. To\_night\_."

"Well, I'm sorry, but I couldn't very well stay at home! Not with that rogue pigeon wreaking havoc in my apartment!"

"Please! You just copied that from this week's Modern Family."

"Damn," he mumbles.

"I get that it's like your cosmic destiny to show up and ruin everything for me \_always\_," Liz says, "but \_here\_? \_Now\_? At the end of everything? That's a new low."

"Maybe my intention wasn't to torment you for once," he shoots back. "Maybe I just didn't want to be alone." He pauses. Swallows. "For this."

"Yeah, well." Something in her flutters. Like a pigeon locked in a house. "I think some of us are meant to be alone."

She resists the urge to bust out her Rustic Southern Man Accent and everything (which, for the record, is \_awesome\_, no matter what Pete says, or that one time it gave Kenneth donkey nightmares). He still gets the reference. Which - is, okay, pretty amazing.

"Poor bloke," Wesley says mournfully. "You know, it's quite sentimental of me, and yet I can't help but hope James and Juliet will find each other in the sidewaysverse. Before the end."

"Me too!" Liz exclaims. "Which is \_crazy\_, because I have so been on the Kate and Sawyer train ever since he shoved his tongue down her throat when he was tied to that tree in season one."

"Choo \_choo\_-oo," Wesley says approvingly. He sounds completely stupid. The only thing worse than how stupid he sounds is the fact

that she's so into the conversation that she doesn't even really want to stop and puke her guts out over how stupid he is.

"Right? That was hot. And gross. And hot. And gross."

"On the other side of attraction lies repulsion," Wesley says wisely. He scrunches up his forehead, thoughtful. "And the other way around, I suppose. Come to think of it."

"Yeah," Liz says. Wow. She's kind of ... looking at his face. And it's not really making her want to punch something. She wonders if she somehow got drunk without noticing. Or consuming any alcohol. "It's like - sure, he loved Kate, and they were sexy in cages, but that didn't work out. Because that's mostly what stuff does. It doesn't work out. But then he and Juliet found something really ... unexpected, but good. And -"

"Stable," Wesley suggests.

"Stable," Liz agrees. "They had each other's backs. And okay, sure, not in a sexy-cage-tongue-tree way, but ... it was simple, and comfortable. And now, I think he deserves to have that back. I just want him to be happy. And shirtless."

"I know what you mean."

"About the shirtless thing?"

"The happy thing," Wesley says, rolling his eyes. "Honestly, Liz, I'm not gay."

"You say that now," she says, "but I happen to know that gayness can be the kind of thing that sneaks up on you, pal. Usually after spending a fair amount of time with me. Not that there's, like, scientific proof that there's a connection there, but I'm just saying. It could happen."

He's doing that thing where he looks at her again. "Would it disappoint you if it did?"

"What? No. What? No."

"Some\_one's sounding like a bit of a fibby Libby."

"Oh my God, Wesley, you can't just rhyme things and have them -"

"PREVIOUSLY ON LOST," intones the TV.

"-It's on, it's on, shut up, shut up!" she cries, swatting him on the arm.

"You shut up!"

"I'll kill your face if you say anything."

"I don't happen to be the one who's talking right now."

"Uh, yes you ar- wait. Damn it!"

They both shut up, for the whole two hours.

Maybe there's a little crying afterwards. On some shoulders.

\* \* \*

><p><strong><em>V. And I want someone who thinks being really into cars is lame<em>\*\*

Turns out, being British gives Wesley some magic MyJamz aptitude; she lets him have hers with the understanding that he'll get it to stop doing that thing where it minorly electric-shocks her like once a week. He stops by the writers' room to drop it off for her. They're supposed to be working, but instead everyone's just freaking out about some bazillion dollar new car Tracy just bought.

"I want to have sex in that car," Frank says, his monotone distinctly awed.

"Have sex in it or with it?" Toofer wants to know.

"Dude, whatever," Frank says. "I'm not picky."

"I know I should find that disgusting," Pete says, "and yet ..."

"I do hope the motorcar they're talking about isn't the one I just accidentally scraped up a bit with my footcycle on my way in," Wesley murmurs in Liz's ear.

"Wesley," Liz says, "it's a bicycle. Bi-cy-cle. You're in America now. Not the England that I'm pretty sure you made up. And nobody's called them motorcars since Chitty Chitty Bang Bang."

"Was that a little smile just then?" he asks, so not paying attention to the words coming out of her mouth at all. "When I said the bit about scratching the motorcar?"

"No," Liz says, and hides her mouth behind her hand. For reasons totally unrelated to smiling.

As he walks out, he does some jaunty, triumphant Viva la Vida\_ whistling.

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><p><strong><em>VI. and strip clubs are gross.<em>\*\*

For Jenna's thirteenth 29th birthday, Liz finds the skeeziest strip joint she can and throws the party there, because she knows there is no greater gift to give Jenna Maroney than being the hottest one in a room full of scantily clad chicks. Bonus points for giving her the opportunity to show off her 'exotic dancing talents,' which she learned for the straight-to-DVD sequel to I Know Who Killed Me (I Still Know Who Killed Me, But I've Forgotten, But I'll Remember, Soon, So Look Out) and always laments not getting to exercise often enough. ("There's a difference between artistic erotica and sluttiness, Liz. It's artistic erotica if you don't have any tattoos!") Plus, the club is called The Pasty Place, and it doubles as a restaurant that serves delicious Cornish meat pies, so, win-win.

She invites Wesley. She's not really sure why. It's just - it'll be a miserable night with or without him. Might as well. Besides, this way, he'll have a prime opportunity to see exactly how messed up her existence can get, which will in turn make him want to scram right on out of it.

Ingenious.

Jenna sings that Miley Cyrus song and tries to copy that stripper pole dance or whatever that she did; Liz pays attention for about two minutes before wandering on over to the counter, and the pasties that aren't attached to anybody's boobs. Mmmm. Food. They serve big mugs of beer with the pasties, too, which is awesome and, for some reason, makes her want to use the expression 'a flagon of ale.' Liz has always secretly sort of wanted to be a viking. Well, ever since the first time she saw How To Train Your Dragon, anyway.

She's happily eating away when Wesley slumps down on the stool next to hers. He looks even paler and more depressing than usual.

"Dude," she says, "what's up?"

"I hate titty taverns," he says miserably.

"Yeah," Liz says, "pretty sure you shouldn't call it that again."

"Women writhing about like cobras," he continues morosely. "Scantily clad, dead-eyed."

"You like your ladies live-eyed and dressed, huh?" she says. She gives him a friendly slug in the shoulder, which is probably the flagon of ale's fault.

"I suppose," he says, with a significant glance at her turtleneck.

Weird.

"Well," Liz says, changing the subject, "If you need something to cheer you up, you can have some of my pastry, because this is where the yummy's at."

"'Where the yummy's at'? Truly? The things you do to the English langua—" He falls silent. "Where did it go?"

"What do you mean?"

"When I sat down, the pastry was essentially whole," Wesley says, staring in awe at her plate. "Now there's nothing left but the end-ridges."

"Crust, Wesley."

"Dear God," he says, ignoring her, "you're inhuman. It's hideous, watching you eat. And fascinating. It defies physics, logic, the limitations of man."

"Oh, my friend, you ain't seen nothin' yet," Liz assures him, then

bangs a hand on the counter. "Hey! Pasty guy! Gimme two more!"

"Two at once?" Wesley gapes at her. "Really?"

"What can I say?" she replies grandly. "It's artistic eatrotica."

She eats. He watches. She's pleasantly on her way to that I-am-going-to-explode feeling. As far as Jenna's birthdays go, this is one of the better ones.

"Whaddya think?" she asks proudly once she's finished them off.

"Less sickening than the strippers," Wesley determines, after some consideration.

She beams at him.

"You've got food in your teeth," he tells her, wincing.

\* \* \*

><p><strong><em>VII. I want someone who will actually empty the dishwasher instead of just taking out forks as needed like I do.<em>\*\*

It's not like coffee with Wesley is a thing. It's not even slightly a thing. It's just a thank you for fixing her MyJamz. That's all. She's pretty much whoring herself out here.

And if he showed up to get her fifteen minutes early, and she freaked out because she wasn't ready yet, well - that's not a thing either. It's not like she's trying to impress him. It just so happens that today happens to be her designated Once Every Three Months If She Gets Around To It Eyebrow-Plucking Day. Believe her, she has no problems looking like that Frida painter lady in front of him. Like, paint her head on a gazelle, and it's cool. Wesley Snipes finding her attractive so does not make her list of priorities.

She finishes up her eyebrows, and freshens her lipstick, and stares at herself in the mirror for longer than strictly necessary. So that she doesn't have to doom herself to Wesley's company 'til the very last minute, that is. But then she starts to hear clanging outside the bathroom, and, well. Worrying.

She comes out to discover that her kitchen looks - spotless? Say what?

"You put away my dishes?" she says, baffled.

He squints at her. "You plucked your eyebrows to go out to coffee with me?"

Oh, jeez. "I won't read into it if you won't."

He offers a hand. "Dealsies."

She sighs, and shakes it. "Dealsies."

\* \* \*

><p><strong><em>VIII. I want someone with clean hands and feet<em>\*\*

"You know," Wesley says, after inspecting her fingernails (and shuddering. Yeah, shuddering. And this is the guy who apparently wants to be with her forever. For some dumb reason), "I happen to have a fantastic manpedo who takes care of that sort of thing. That's what we call the mani-pedi artists, over in merry old En-"

"That sounds like man who is a pedophile."

"... ah, right," Wesley says, a bit guiltily. "Well. In any case. The woman I go to does a splendid mani-pedi. I could try to work my charms, get you an appointment."

"Yeah, uh, Wesley, I don't need you overseeing my personal hygiene--"

"You could wear open-toed shoes in public again without shame," he says tantalizingly.

And, well, okay, that does sound pretty-

"You're gay," Liz interrupts her own thought process, because suddenly it seems really important to drive this one home. "You're gay..."

"I am not--"

"Wesley, you may not know it. But I know it. This is me, telling you. Spoiler alert: you're gay."

"Oh, Liz," he says, frustrated. He's still holding her hand. "I'm not gay! When will you get it through your bloody skull?"

"Whoa," Liz says, "you actually used your Brit slang correctly there."

"I should blimey well hope so," he sorta growls, "I am British--"

"Wait," she says, frowning, "that was wrong agai--"

And then he kisses her.

It is - pretty freaking ungay.

\* \* \*

><p><strong><em>IX. and beefy forearms like a damn Disney prince!<em>\*\*

They're in her bed, and it's afterward, and she should be more grossed out. More freaked out. It's freaking her out that she's not grossed out. She likes to think that at least counts for something.

She leans on an elbow and surreptitiously tries to sneak a look at his forearms while he's making fun of the copy of Eat, Pray, Love on her bedside table. ("Perhaps she should write a sequel with you in mind, but just call it Eat, Eat, Eat, And Eat Some More-")

He turns around, super-fast, and sees her looking.

"I can do seventeen and a half push-ups, you know," he says slyly. And winks. "Well - you Americans call them push-ups, anyhow, but the proper name is actually-"

"Ughhhh," she says, and flops dramatically onto her back.

\* \* \*

><p><strong><em>X. And I want him to genuinely like me, even when I'm old.<em>\*\*

It's a certain month time, a bad month time, and she had to skip breakfast and Tracy has decided he wants to star in a biopic about Martin Luther (not Martin Luther King Jr.; Martin Luther, who Tracy seems to believe got his big break cross-breeding peas) and Jenna's in a fight with her boyfriend because there's a picture of him labeled 'Jenna Maroney out and about' on Perez Hilton and as a result Paul's been standing outside Jenna's dressing room door pounding on it yelling "JENNA, JENNA!" for the past six hours, during which time Liz has mistaken him for Jenna nine times, and one of Frank's sketches has gotten TGS into a feud with Ke\$ha and Liz is always sure that the next time she goes outside she's going to get jumped by that chick, and probably shivved and put into a dumpster, and Jack is trying to figure out how to propose to Avery by practicing on Liz and he said something about braiding her hair that still gives her the ew-shivers when she thinks about it and also, yeah, yeah, DENNIS DUFFY met Lindsay Lohan at an Arby's and now the cover story on the most recent US Weekly is SUBWAY HERO SAVES LOHAN FROM HERSELF; SAYS 'DOWN WITH COKE, DUMMY, UP WITH FREAKY FRIDAY 2.' And all of this has made her go bitch monster, and she's pretty sure that earlier she made Kenneth go hide in a closet and cry.

And her bra, apropos of nothing, split in half earlier. Actual half. She probably should have taken Jenna up on that offer to go lingerie shopping awhile back, instead of just seeing how long she could keep it going on hope and duct tape.

When Wesley comes in to bring her lunch, she's struck by one desire to hug him and another desire to kill him, and they're both overwhelming. She sits at her desk and lets them duke it out.

"You look horrible," he declares, wrinkling his nose.

Bye, hugs.

"I WILL STRAIGHT UP LITERALLY KILL YOU," she says.

Doesn't seem to bother him. "You do realize that this sandwich is disgusting? When I informed the bloke behind the counter that I wanted meatball, tuna, and corned beef packed onto the same bread, I thought I was going to get thrown out of the shoppe." She can hear the extra '-pe.'

"GIVE ME THE SANDWICH, GOLLUM."

He leans over quickly and drops the sandwich on her desk, like she's something ravenous and huge and horrifying, like he's trying to feed the T-Rex in Jurassic Park.

"My God," he marvels, watching her eat. "You're like the T-Rex in Jurassic Park."

"YO'S'ANNOYINGGGFF," she informs him through a mouthful of (nasty yet delicious) sandwich.

"By the way, some very ratty-looking blonde girl was asking around for you out front. Quite a shifty-eyed little harridan, I didn't like the look of her. Told her you'd quit your job and fled to Majorca."

"You did?"

"And I popped in for a quick hallo—" No 'a' in 'hello,' NO 'A,' \_she thinks, but only briefly, "-with your mate Jenna, and told her how much I enjoyed her performance as Amanda Seyfried's character in the unauthorized Mamma Mia prequel on youtube."

"The one you have to search for as 'aimammam' so it doesn't get deleted for copyright issues?"

"The very one," he grins. "Those A\*Teens songs are quite bouncy, aren't they?"

"Bouncy," Liz repeats faintly.

"Anyhow, it seemed to cheer her up quite a bit. She and that nancy-lad of hers were happily dancing queen-ing it down the hall last I saw."

"Happily ... ?" Liz repeats wonderingly. Jenna. Happy. Should not compute. Not today.

"I ran into Tracy as well. Told him how much I'm looking forward to the next installment of the Fat Bitch saga. That I expect it might be even better than Furry Vengeance. It seemed to renew his enthusiasm. Stopped him from talking about breeding peas, or whatever flimflammery he was on about there."

"Flimflammery—"

"And then Jack pulled me up into his office for just a jiffy, and we had a quick bloke-to-bloke chatter about his current lady situation, and just for the record, my darling, lovers or not, I am \_not\_ going to braid your hair."

"That word bums me out," Liz says dimly, "unless it's between 'meat' and 'pizza.' "

"Oh, I've ordered one of them as well!" he says, undaunted. "For tonight. I thought we'd stay in for Access Hollywood and make fun of that horrendous chap Lindsay Lohan's dating."

It's the pigeon-in-the-house feeling again, except her chest is the

house and her heart is the pigeon and it's flapping and fluttering in a way that suddenly, unfathomably doesn't suck, and settling, all of a sudden, doesn't sound like the worst thing in the world, like, settling is good sometimes, like, where would America be if people hadn't settled in it? Everyone would still be over in England, saying 'flimflam' and 'chap' and 'footcycle,' and-

"Marry me," Liz says.

Wesley goes very still. He cocks his head, like some British spaniel dog listening for ... ducks, or something. "What was that?"

"Nothing," she says quickly.

"I'm quite certain you said--"

"Scary bee!" she exclaims, on a flash of inspiration. "I - saw a scary bee. Over there." She gestures in like three directions at once, which she gets is physically impossible, but still.

"There were more m's, the first time you said it," Wesley insists, taking a few steps nearer to her. He's got that stupid smirky smile on his face.

"There's a bee, there's a scary bee," Liz says firmly. "And you should kill it. That was our deal, remember? Way back when? You kill the bugs and open the jars, I make you look less gay."

"Right then," Wesley says with a resigned sigh. "Where's this bee?"

"There," Liz says, flopping one arm vaguely in something that's sort of like a direction.

So Wesley rolls up his sleeves, ready for bug-killing business, and he flounders around the room swatting things at random, making little 'oof!' noises because, guess what, seventeen and a half push-ups does not a damn Disney prince's arms make. Liz sits back in her chair, and feels suspiciously un-terrible about life, and watches him while she finishes her sandwich.

End  
file.